

How to Succeed with Yeast—Top 10 Tips

YEAST (responsible for producing the leavening gas) THINK: gas production!

- 1. Don't forget that yeast is a living organism**—small, but mighty. It not only leavens the dough; it also conditions the dough & influences the flavor of the finished baked product. Treat it right and it will work for you.
- 2. Understand the different 'types' of baker's yeast**
 1. Fresh cake yeast
 2. Active Dry Yeast
 3. Fast-rising or Instant Dry Yeast
- 3. Proper Yeast Storage & Handling of Dry Yeast**
 - Unopened packets and jars of yeast may be stored at room temperature, but should not be exposed to temperatures above 85 – 90°F. Do not store yeast above the refrigerator or next to the stove. It is OK to store unopened packages in the refrigerator or freezer to avoid the risk of higher temperature exposure.
 - Since yeast is very perishable when exposed to air, moisture, and heat, all opened packages or jars of yeast must be refrigerated or frozen in an airtight container. Under refrigeration, the expected life of the yeast is about four months and when frozen, six months. You may continue to use the yeast as long as it is active. Proof it to find out if it is still active.
 - If you purchase yeast in the large 1# or 2# industrial packages, once opened, divide yeast into a couple of quart-sized freezer bags. Be sure to squeeze air out of the bag to the level of the yeast prior to sealing the bag. Store the bag in the freezer. Dry yeast contains very little moisture, so it will not freeze solid.
 - Whether you store your yeast in the refrigerator or freezer, we recommend to measure out the amount you plan to use and allow it to sit out on the counter for 30 – 45 minutes to allow it to warm up a bit before you add warm liquids to it.
- 4. Understand how temperature affects yeast action**
 - Yeast works faster at higher temperatures; slower at cooler temperatures.
 - Don't stress over the temperature of your liquids. As long as the liquid you use is comfortable to touch, it's okay for the yeast. If you've heated the liquid hotter than comfortable, let it cool before you use it.
 - If you use a thermometer, an instant-read thermometer is best. A candy thermometer is not recommended.
- 5. If you're in doubt, have a failure, or just want to be sure the yeast activates properly, proof the yeast in a small amount of warm water with a pinch of sugar**
 - Rising failures can result from many different factors. [Proofing the yeast](#) is the simplest way to find out if the yeast is the culprit.



DOUGH (responsible for retaining the leavening to rise/expand) THINK: gas retention!

1. Not all [flours](#) are created equal!

- For best results, use bread flour. All-purpose flour tends to be weaker and less tolerant. Bread flour is stronger with better dough forming and rising properties.
- Be aware of the whole grain factor.
- Weak flour = weak dough = poor gas retention

2. Moisture of the flour and liquid absorption can vary

- Always start out by adding less flour than what is called for in the recipe.
- Add last cup of flour gradually during mixing/kneading to achieve correct flour/liquid balance.
- Don't be afraid to adjust if your dough is too dry or too wet, as either extreme will affect dough rising and gas retention.

3. Know your dough!

- The consistency of the dough after mixing/kneading is crucial for success
- The goal is to properly develop the gluten to form a dough that will 'trap' the leavening
- Use the '[gluten window](#)' test: Pinch off a walnut-size piece of dough, stretch it gently between your thumbs & index fingers like you'd work a balloon before blowing it up. A developed dough will stretch nicely without tearing & form a translucent membrane. This is the 'gluten window'.
- A properly developed dough will maximize gas retention!

4. Dough Rising/Proofing Tips

- Go by dough look and feel, not by time! Use the '[ripe](#)' test.
- No special environment is necessary. There's heat generated inside the dough that will determine the rate of yeast activity and the potential for rising. Avoid trying to speed up the rising by adding more yeast or increasing the temperature of the liquid or the room.
- Avoid drying out the dough. Keep it covered (plastic wrap or a plastic shower cap work very well!) A dry 'skin' on the top of the dough will inhibit rising.
- Don't allow the dough to rise too long once its shaped and in the pan. It may look amazing and perfect, but it may fall flat in the oven and look like it never rose at all. Or it may start to flatten even before you put it in the oven. If this is the case, it's definitely risen too long.
- To determine when the dough is ready to go into the oven, touch it lightly with your index finger. When the indentation remains, it is ready to be baked. Done correctly, you can expect a beautiful 'oven spring'!

5. Understand dough tolerance & how yeast action affects the condition/consistency of dough

- The yeast will begin producing CO₂ as soon as it is activated and will continue until the dough is placed in the oven to be baked. Yeast action is ceased when the dough reaches a temperature of 140°F within the first 5-6 minutes of baking.
- As the yeast 'works' on the dough, it conditions and relaxes the dough. If the dough is conditioned/relaxed too much, it becomes weak and will stop retaining the leavening being produced by the yeast.

